United Nations

Press Release

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General urges Iraqi President Hussein to withdraw forces at once; says if process under way, Iraq and its forces would not be attacked.

- Speakers in Committee of Whole discuss verification and possible reconvening of Amendment Conference to partial test-ban Treaty at later date.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar this evening urged President Saddam Hussein to commence, without delay, the total withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. In a statement to the press, he said that if such a commitment were made, and clear and substantial steps were taken to implement the Security Council e resolutions, a just peace, with all of its benefits, would follow.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar went on to say that as 15 January advanced, "the world stands poised between peace and war". He appealed to President Hussein "to turn the course of events away from catastrophe and towards a new era of justice and harmony based on the principles of the United Nations Charter". All efforts in that direction would fail, he said, unless Iraq could signify its readiness to comply with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, beginning with resolution 660 (1990).

The Secretary-General stated that neither Iraq nor its forces would be attacked by those arrayed in the international coalition against Iraq, if those resolutions were complied with. This, he said, was based on understandings he had received from Governments at the highest level.

With the commencement of withdrawal, as Secretary-General of the United Nations he would, with the consent of the parties concerned, and the agreement of the Security Council, be prepared immediately to deploy United Nations observers and, if necessary, United Nations forces, to certify the withdrawal and to ensure that hostilities did not erupt on the ground. In addition, he declared, with Iraqi compliance of the resolutions, he would urge the Security

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Council to review its decisions imposing sanctions against Iraq, and encourage a process whereby foreign forces deployed in the area would be phased out.

Peace in the region, the Secretary-General continued, required that all of its problems be resolved justly and equitably, in accordance with the principles of the Charter. He had received assurance from the highest levels of government, that with the resolution of the present crisis, every effort would be made to address, in a comprehensive manner, the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Palestinian question.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar said that, as he had stated to the Council last night, all were aware of the extreme gravity of the decisions to be made in the period ahead. No one and no nation could, he stated, resort to the other "necessary means" implied by resolution 678 (1990), knowing in advance that tragic and unpredictable consequences could follow.

The Secretary-General expressed hope that wisdom and statesmanship would prevail in all quarters, in order to avoid conflict. In appealing to President Saddam Hussein today, he wished to convey his readiness to work with him and all others concerned to this end.

Concluding, Mr. Perez de Cuellar said that, in the tenth and final year of his tenure as Secretary-General of the United Nations, no cause would give him greater satisfaction than to set the Middle East as a whole on the road to just and lasting peace. He stated that no disappointment would be greater and more tragic than to find the nations of the world engaging in a conflict that none of their peoples wanted.

Members of the Security Council resumed private consultations today at noon in the search for a peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis before the expiration of the deadline set for midnight tonight. The Council met through the night last night, discussing various proposals to encourage Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait.

During those consultations, the Secretary-General presented to the Council a report on his peace mission to Baghdad. He told the press later that the Council had decided to keep the report confidential. The Secretary-General indicated that since his mission "had not given the results expected", members of the Council were "unanimous in desiring a peaceful solution to the present situation". He said Council members were prepared to continue their efforts all of today in order to avoid the war.

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The Committee of the Whole of the Amendment Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water -- also called the partial test-ban Treaty -- continued this morning to consider a proposed amendment which would convert that Treaty into a comprehensive ban.

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Speakers addressed both verification issues and the question of whether the Amendment Conference should be reconvened at a later date. Several participants stressed that verification was a complex issue involving a global network to monitor seismic events and the release of radioisotopes, as well as the use of remotely sensed imagery and on-site inspections. While some said it was already possible to verify a comprehensive test ban, others maintained that additional technical work was needed.

Many of the participants suggested that the Amendment Conference should meet again to pursue the goal of a comprehensive test ban. Other speakers said the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva was the proper forum for negotiating such a ban.

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